

Outline of review process for multicomponent grant applications and suggestions about how to prepare applications

1. Scientific review staff prepare a comprehensive list of all individuals, and their institutions, who are named in the submitted applications.
2. No individual who is named in an application may be a reviewer of any of the applications. Therefore, as specified on page 11 of RFA-CA-05-024, the names of any potential members of the Steering Committee should not be provided, and these individuals should be contacted and selected only if the award of a grant is anticipated.
3. A reviewer who is in the same department (or equivalent organizational unit) as a named individual will typically not be assigned to the review of the application in which that individual is named and will leave the room during the review of the application.
4. Reviewers will be recruited who have the appropriate expertise to review each Project and Core, and other reviewers will be recruited who have the expertise to judge the quality of the CCNE as a whole. The information in the Descriptions of each Project and Core, along with the corresponding specific aims, will be used to determine the kinds of expertise needed. Therefore, the Descriptions and specific aims should be carefully written to fully describe the kinds of science involved.
5. Typically, two reviewers will be assigned to review each Project, one or two to review each Core, and at least two to judge the overall CCNE Organizational Framework, given the extensive emphasis in the RFA on the structural organization of the CCNE.
6. Each reviewer will probably be given an annotated copy of the RFA in which all imperative helper verbs or equivalent (e.g., “must”) and all advisory helper verbs (e.g., “should”) are circled so as to give guidance about the features of the application that should be considered in arriving at a priority score. Therefore, each applicant should carefully examine the RFA for such verbs and prepare the application accordingly. Applications that do not address the most important “must” statements may be returned without review.
7. Reviewers are assigned to a subset of the Projects, Cores, and the CCNE Organizational Frameworks according to their areas of expertise. A typical review load might be nine Projects or their equivalent in numbers of pages to be evaluated.
8. Reviewers assigned to evaluate the CCNE Organizational Framework will be explicitly charged with the task of determining the “value added” achieved by gathering the individual Projects and Cores under one umbrella. Projects that might not be very highly regarded as individual efforts might be deemed crucial to the overall mission of the CCNE.
9. About a week after the reviewers have received the applications, and their review assignments, an orientation teleconference is held to give the reviewers programmatic

and review guidance. The goal is to introduce the reviewers to the purpose of the CCNE program and discuss the relation of the program goals to the review criteria, as specified in the RFA.

10. Each reviewer will provide a tentative score and critique for each of his/her review assignments about one week before the review meeting. Tentative critiques may be in the form of an outline of the main strengths and weaknesses.

11. Cores will likely not be given numeric tentative scores but will be designated as superior, average, or deficient.

12. Based on the tentative scores received and compiled, the applications that have received composite scores that place them in the lower half (approximately) of all of the applications being reviewed will not be discussed at the review meeting and will not be scored (i.e., they will be “unscored”). These applications will nevertheless receive full Summary Statements providing the reasoning of the individual assigned reviewers.

13. The remaining applications will be discussed fully, although certain marginal applications may be nominated for “unscored” as the meeting progresses and their most serious flaws identified briefly before being “unscored.” At the end of the discussion, the assigned reviewers will be asked to state their final recommendations with respect to the individual Projects and Cores, as well as the degree to which the Organizational Framework contributes to a unified and effective CCNE.

14. During the review the panel will also consider the plans for the use of human and animal subjects in the proposed research. Because deficiencies can have a negative effect on the score, the applicant is encouraged to follow the PHS 398 instructions carefully and supply all of the required information.

15. The final score will be a three-digit average of all of the two-digit votes cast by the reviewers present during the discussion.